transcription factor having an amino acid with at least about 70% identity, preferably at least about 80% identity, and more preferably at least about 90% identity to the sequence AANARERRRMHGLNHAFDQLR (SEQ ID NO:70) to a cell in the animal. In some embodiments, the cell in the animal is located in the inner ear of the animal. Preferably, the transcription factor competes with atonal for binding to Daughterless protein (Jarman et al., 1993) or competes for binding with Math-1 to E47 protein (Akazawa et al., 1995).

In the Claims

Please cancel claim 50. Please add new claim 124.

Subf1 E2

40. (Amended Twice) A method of generating hair cells for an animal, comprising delivering directly to an inner ear a therapeutically effective amount of an atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence to a cell of said animal, wherein hair cells develop in said animal and wherein said atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence encodes a polypeptide that has hair cell generating activity and has at least about 80% identity to SEQ ID NO:58.

E3

48. (Amended Once) The method of claim 40, wherein said cell contains an alteration in an atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence.

Subf2 E4

112. (Amended Twice) A composition comprising an *atonal*-associated nucleic acid sequence in combination with a delivery vehicle, wherein said delivery vehicle results in delivery of a therapeutically effective amount of *atonal*-associated nucleic acid sequence into a cell, and wherein said *atonal*-associated nucleic acid sequence encodes a polypeptide that has hair cell generating activity and has at least about 80% identity to SEQ ID NO:58.

E5

113. (Amended Once) The composition of claim 112, wherein said delivery vehicle comprises a vector that expresses an atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence in an animal cell.

E6

114. (Amended Once) The composition of claim 113, wherein said vector is selected from the group consisting of a viral vector, a plasmid, or a combination thereof.

sub B3 B4

121. (Amended Twice) A nucleic acid sequence encoding a fusion protein comprising an *atonal*-associated amino acid sequence or fragment thereof and a desired amino acid sequence, wherein said *atonal*-associated nucleic acid sequence encodes a polypeptide that has hair cell generating activity and has at least about 80% identity to SEQ ID NO:58.

124. (New) The composition of claim 112, wherein said delivery vehicle is a liposome, a peptide, a lipid, a carbohydrate, or a combination thereof.